

serves as an honorary board member. He also serves on the board of Lighthouse Ranch for Boys in Hammond, LA.

Through his leadership and dedication, Pastor Paul Welch has honorably and spiritually served the church and the northwest Florida community. But he is also a loving husband and father, and Pensacola is truly blessed to have him as one of her own.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the U.S. Congress, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to a man who has served as an inspiration to us all. A deep sense of personal service to his faith for so many years is something to truly be admired and honored.

HONORING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF COPPELL HIGH SCHOOL BAND

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Mr. MARCHANT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Coppell High School Band for their accomplishments and commitment to the City of Coppell. The Coppell High School Band represents one of the finest organizations in Texas and in the City of Coppell. The band, which is composed of over 350 members, represents the school with pride and dedication that is shown through their hard work, perseverance, and achievements. The Coppell Band has received a variety of National and local awards and honors such as the Tournament of Roses Parade and has been a 7-year consecutive winner of the Texas State Solo and Ensemble Championship. I commend the Coppell Band of past and present for their dedication during challenging periods of growth and laud their accomplishments of becoming a premier north Texas organization for families and students to become involved in. I honor the Coppell High School Band on this milestone and look forward to the future as the city and this organization continues to be a shining example in north Texas. It is with pride that I serve such a distinguished city in my congressional district and give my sincere congratulations to the Coppell High School Band.

FREEDOM FOR OSCAR SÁNCHEZ MADAN

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about Oscar Sánchez Madan, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Sánchez Madan is an independent journalist who has been a contributor to the independent press agency Cubanet since 2005. His straightforward articles as an independent journalist in totalitarian Cuba have helped interested observers of the Cuban tragedy throughout the world to learn the truth about the nightmare that is the Castro regime. Because of his commitment to accurate reporting, he persistently chronicled the brutal violence and rampant corruption of the Cuban

tyranny. Mr. Sánchez reported the truth in totalitarian Cuba, with the knowledge that any freedom of the press, any effort to shed light on the regime's atrocities, is met with brutal repression.

According to a Cubanet report, Mr. Sánchez Madan was arrested and detained by state security thugs on February 25, 2007 because of articles he had written describing problems confronted by the oppressed people of Cuba on a daily basis. He also reported on corruption by a government official in the town of Pedro Betancourt. After being detained, several state security agents questioned Mr. Sánchez Madan, demanding to know whether he was an independent journalist or had studied journalism. All the documents he carried on him pertaining to a story he was working on were confiscated.

Despite being forced to endure incessant repression, beatings and several unwarranted detentions in the last year alone, he remained committed to the people of Cuba and to exposing the truth concerning the tyranny. According to reports, on April 13, 2007, state security thugs confronted Mr. Sánchez Madan with trumped-up charges that he posed a "pre-criminal social danger". In little over one day, he was arrested, tried and "sentenced" to 4 years of torture in a totalitarian dungeon without even so much as the presence of a relative or a defense lawyer.

Mr. Sánchez Madan finds himself in an infernal cell in the totalitarian gulag whose depraved conditions are described by the U.S. State Department as "harsh and life threatening." The State Department also reports that police and prison officials beat, neglect, isolate, and deny medical treatment to detainees and prisoners. It is a crime against humanity that people who work for freedom, who expose the truth and who work for the restoration of human rights to the Cuban people, are locked up in these condemnable conditions.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Sánchez Madan is one of the many heroes of the Cuban democratic movement locked in the dungeons of a maniacal tyrant for exposing the truth about the realities of totalitarian Cuba. No matter how horrifically brutal the consequences of a dignified struggle for liberty, these men and women represent the best of the Cuban nation. My colleagues, we must demand the immediate release of Oscar Sánchez Madan and every political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

HONORING THE MESQUITE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT EDUCATION FOUNDATION

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Speaker, today I would like to honor the Mesquite Independent School District Education Foundation for their dedication to the Mesquite community where they enrich the education and development of the city's 35,000 children. The Foundation promotes community awareness and student development, provides educational funding and encourages creativity. Their work has supplied valuable funds through grants for programs to supplement school budgets. Their efforts help students in Mesquite have access to the best educational experience possible.

The Foundation has been instrumental in financing many programs that kids enjoy today. Such funds have been used to purchase "hands-on consumable science lab materials" to provide students with interactive laboratory equipment. Other grants have secured reading materials for pre-school children to increase pre-kindergarten reading readiness levels.

To date, the Foundation has raised over \$800,000 and has awarded more than \$200,000 in grants to campuses and individuals. Soon, the Foundation will be formally announcing their next round of grants totaling an additional \$200,000.

As the Congressional representative of Mesquite, Texas, it is my distinct pleasure to honor the Mesquite Independent School District Education Foundation today in the United States House of Representatives.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TIMOTHY J. WALZ

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from the chamber yesterday, April 25, 2007. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote 259.

THE VIRGINIA TECH TRAGEDY

HON. JAY INSLEE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, in the aftermath of the terrible tragedy at Virginia Tech, as people try to make sense of this senseless act, we must remember to find strength in community. Last week, I spoke to Korean-American leaders in my district who expressed their deepest sympathies to all those affected by this tragedy—the same sense of sorrow shared by all Americans. I expressed my hope that the Korean-American community would not be targeted in any way, in the aftermath of this situation.

I am proud that so far this fear hasn't materialized, but I rise today to remind Americans not to place blame on this or any other group. Korean Americans should feel no communal sense of guilt or responsibility for this act. Their own pride in their achievements and contributions to American society should remain undiminished.

Rather, we all should keep the victims, their families and the Virginia Tech community in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time. We can do this by supporting efforts like that of Washington State Senator Paul Shin, who has been working with local Korean Americans to start a fund for the victims' families. We also should work together to make sure that college campuses across our Nation retain their openness and continue to be bastions of hope and opportunity.